

2010 ROTCH Preliminary Competition Proposal

Film, Place and Urban Identity:

A Film Archive and Outdoor Theater for Chinatown



Throughout the last several years, discussion has heightened over the various residual and underused urban sites throughout Boston. As with many sites in flux, either due to construction delays caused by the economy or political debates within the city itself, often these sites have a presence, or rather, an absence that permeates the city and can imply a sense of decline.

However, sometimes there are exceptions to this neglect. Rather than accepting the unoccupied state of a site, there have been several examples of resident individuals taking advantage of this interim condition as an opportunity to explore the possibilities and local impact of a temporary public intervention.

The Preliminary Rotch problem this year proposes to elaborate on one particular and very successful current intervention on the edge of Chinatown: A temporary Outdoor Theater and film festival known as "Films at the Gate." Currently this event takes place annually for just one week during the month of August; however for the purposes of this proposal you will extend the outdoor cinema for the full summer season. The challenge for the candidate will be to both (re)design the Outdoor Theater and seating component to double as an open public/park structure, *and* to add a collaborative, more permanent program to the site - a Film Archive. The intent is to make Independent Film more personal and part of the urban fabric - to promote local film makers as well as national and international film.

Traditionally the medium of Film has had the power to bring together people of diverse cultures, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, interests, etc. For this reason, Cinema is one of the more inclusive and public programs a city can offer. It has the potential to produce *Event*, a public experience, a memory – the possibility to recreate one's awareness and identity with an entire urban district.

The objective of hybridizing a temporal (outdoor theater/seating/park) and permanent program (a Film Archive) is aimed at proposing a social value on the overlap of institution and open use. Markus Miessen and Kenny Cupers would refer to this condition as the intersection of the *consumer and the non-consumer*. However, in order for the non-consumer to understand the site as accessible and interpretable, adaptability must be explicit.

This initiative toward site appropriation is further referred to by Miessen and Cupers as the *micro-politics* of public space. They bring to light in "Spaces of Uncertainty" the value in the *realities* of taking over *place* outside of a more definitive architecture and planning. The text continues to describe the residual spaces adjacent to and alongside the more structured and designed places of everyday urban life as spaces that allow for those traditionally "excluded from contemporary public space" to engage with those that are considered more a part of the consumer culture. This specific site in Chinatown has the potential for this heavily charged intersection of users.

The Preliminary Rotch problem challenges the candidate to design a *site* and *architecture* that allows for both the film advocate and the general public to intersect – for *definitive* and *improvised* space to co-exist.



¹ Miessen, Markus and Kenny Cupers. Spaces of Uncertainty. Verlag Muller + Busmann, 2002.



site

AN EDGE SITE:

The project site is located on the edge of Chinatown on a parcel flanked by Hudson Street and the John F. Fitzgerald Expressway – adjacent to the Chinatown Gate and just south of the Rose Kennedy Greenway. It is a five minute walk to South Station with access to the subway, commuter rail, bus and Amtrak systems.

This particular site is not the traditional urban infill, but rather more of an open parcel that potentially operates as a threshold from one district to another, an edge condition buffering vehicle from pedestrian, and is positioned such that, with the right balance of programmed and unprogrammed public space, has the potential to become a new social and cultural hub for this entire area.

As with many Chinatown districts throughout the country, Chinatown in Boston has been considered an insular community and somewhat physically and culturally disconnected from its closest neighborhoods (i.e. Downtown Crossing, the Leather District, Fort Point Channel and the Seaport District). However, just over the past several years there has been a real effort from both within and without the community to engage more with the city.



site

The organization “Boston Street Lab” is one of the groups leading this effort. BSL is a nonprofit group that describes itself as producers of temporary cultural and civic programs in and around the Chinatown area. As the group responsible for organizing “Films at the Gate,” as well as constructing the

temporary Chinatown Storefront Library (just opened in September 2009 and built and designed partially by students at the Graduate School of Design), the assumption is that an organization such as this may have the momentum and fund raising capacity to initiate the construction of this new Outdoor Theater and Film Archive.

The candidate is asked to consider this project as both landscape and park, as well as a highly programmed architectural proposition - to combine adaptable systems with fixed construction. The ambition is to design through the lens of a *landscape urbanist* as well as an architect to physically and psychologically provide a more blurred and inclusive edge to Chinatown.



Site (aerial of 'Films at the Gate' event)

THE PROGRAM:

The design for the Film Archive and Outdoor Theater will be an integration of landscape (open park area), adaptable systems (outdoor theater and seating), and permanent construction (the Film Archive).

The **Outdoor Theater** must provide a summer venue for cinema with a new structure that incorporates permanent and/or temporary seating for the movie viewing as well as for off hours use and recreation. (TKTS nyc, HighLine nyc, etc...) The challenge is to design a flexible system that is integrated with the overall site strategy that can be easily appropriated as an extension of the public park component.



The **Film Archive** should be conceived of as a building and institution that will cultivate discourse and appreciation for the independent film culture, as well as provide new architectural form and cultural identity for this urban edge.

The building should represent the moving image as an accessible and inclusive medium. The program as written is framed to initiate workshops and local experimentation and production of film and video. In addition, there is a gallery space proposed to showcase exhibitions related to film and promote possible *outside* exhibition use for the surrounding neighborhoods.

The intent is for the candidate to invent a public site and architecture that represents the Film Archive and Cinema as an open cultural center and landscape.

The form, scale, tectonic, and materiality of the proposal should embody this ambition.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION:

- **Urban Scale:** Strategy for the open public space (park area and outdoor theater/seating) intended as hybrid of program and unprogrammed space.
- **Architectural Scale:** Building Form and materiality representative of Independent Film as neighborhood cultural center.
- Representation of how *edges* of site/building dialogue with surrounding terrain, pedestrian passage(s), circulation, context, etc.
- The quality of the presentation including diagrams, orthographic architectural drawings, three-dimensional renderings and graphic layout.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

(please note all SF are approximate!)

Site Parameters: app 13,125 SF Overall Parcel Size

Zoning Restrictions: For the purposes of this competition, the candidate is to assume a height restriction of 65' for the entire site and a 5'-0" setback for *built structures only* on the Hudson Street and John F. Fitzgerald Expressway side(s).

(Outdoor Space)

OUTDOOR THEATER:

- Outdoor Screen size to be determined by candidate
- Permanent and/or partial temporary seating accommodate up to 200
- Storage space for Temporary Seating (if designed as temporary)
- Projection Booth app. 200 SF

PUBLIC PARK AREA:

- Outdoor public park area SF up to 20% of overall site footprint
(can be hard and/or soft surface(s))

(Indoor Space)

FILM ARCHIVE:

Primary Public Spaces:

- Public Lobby app. 300 - 600 SF
- Small Indoor Theater (seating up to 200 people) app. 2000 SF
- Café/Lounge (can be indoor and/or outdoor space) app. 800 SF
- Film Bookshop and library (books, rare films, collections, etc) app. 500 SF
- Gallery / Exhibition Space(s) app. 700 -1000 SF
- Accessible Men's and Women's Bathrooms. ADA standards app. 200 SF
(must be accessible to public park space *and* Film Archive)
- Digital Filmmaking Workshops / Seminar/Lecture/Conf. Rooms - (3) rooms app. 1200 SF
(app. 400 sf each)

Administrative Spaces:

- Film Vault (location for immediate film storage) app. 1000 SF
- Conservation Department/Conservation Lab app. 800 SF
(Film restoration – chemical process involved)
- Administrative Offices app. 400 SF total

FILM ARCHIVE TOTAL SF = app. 7,900 - 8,500 SF

* No parking required.

* **Existing vertical vent structure on site must remain!**

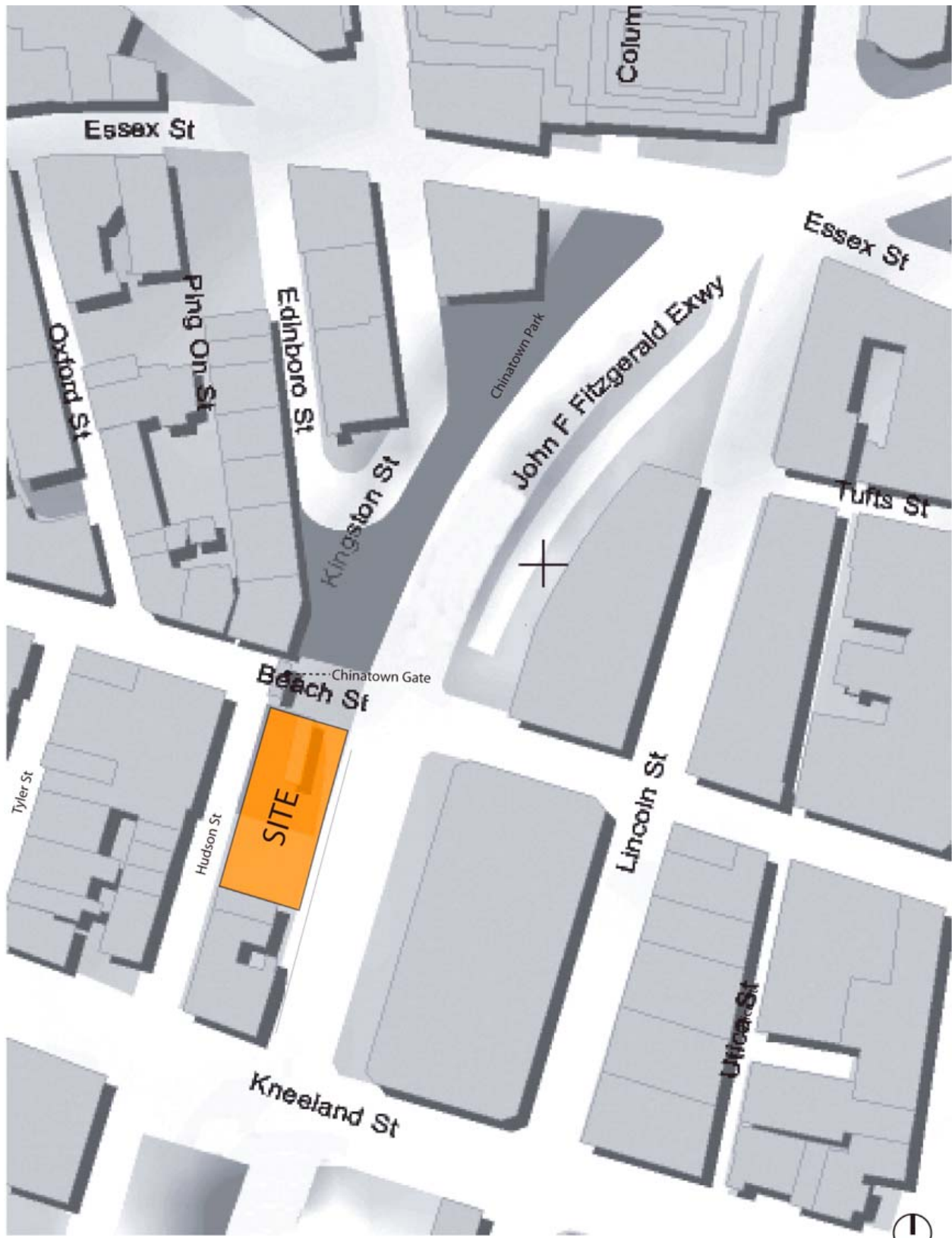
- This structure may be embedded within proposed building(s), re-clad, surrounded by new structure(s), considered as vertical landscape, etc.

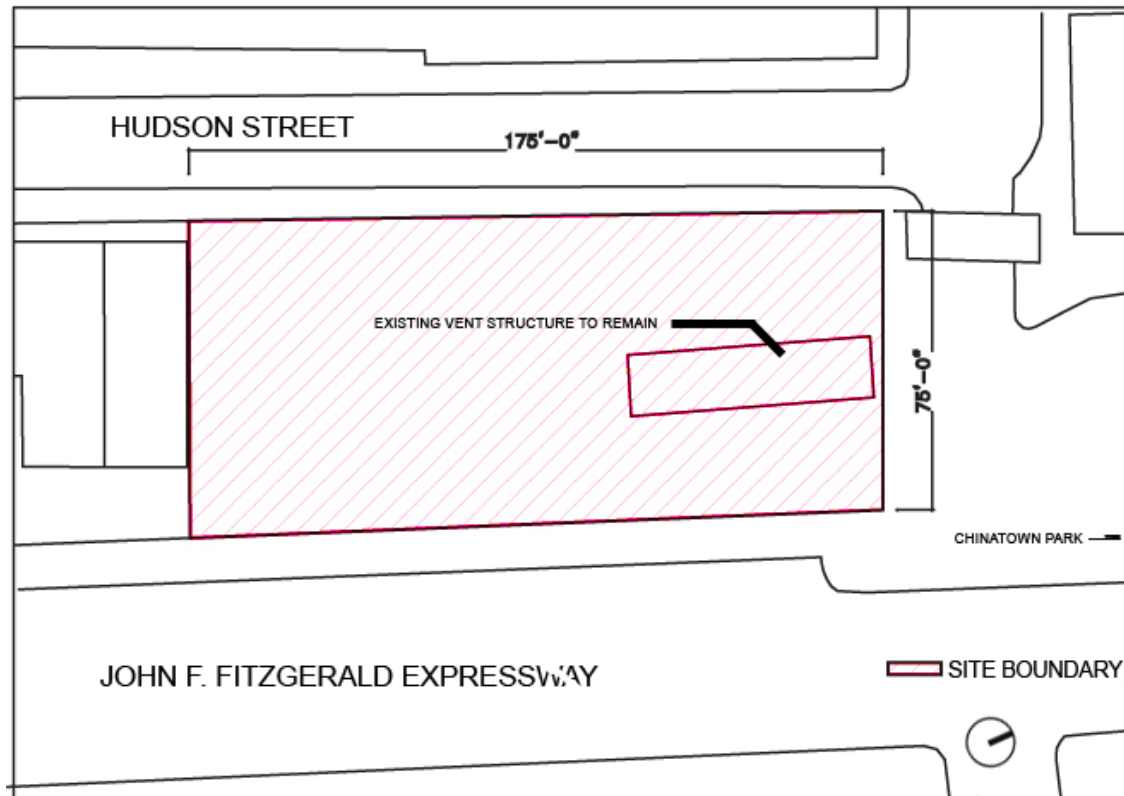


REQUIREMENTS:

- (2) 24 X 36 vertical format boards containing the following:
 - 300 word explanation of design intentions.
 - Site Plan including overall Site and First Floor Plan @ Film Archive (scale: 1:200)
 - Additional *relevant* Building Plans for Film Archive
 - DIAGRAMS:
 - o Circulation Diagram
 - o Programmatic Diagram
 - o Diagram describing Project Strategy/Disposition toward City
 - Aerial 3D View
 - 1-2 Building Section(s)
 - 1-2 Site Section(s) (*may* incorporate Building Section(s) into Site Section(s))
 - 3-D representation including at least one eye-level Site Perspective(s) with Outdoor Theater / Seating Design strategy
 - 3-D representation including at least one eye-level Building Perspective
 - Any photographic documentation that supports the proposal (photographs of physical models)

No models or projections from the boards are permitted, although model photographs or drawings may be mounted on boards. The jury has no preference for electronic representations or hand drawings. The Rotch Committee reserves the right to use the drawings for publication.





site plan

REFERENCES:

Maps & Aerials:

Site Address: 12A – 6 Hudson Street in addition to open parcel adjacent to Chinatown Gate (see 'site boundary' @ Site Plan above for parameters). There is a required 5'-0" setback for *built structures only* at Hudson Street and John F. Fitzgerald Expressway side(s) of site.

www.mapjunction.com/bra/

www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/pdf/ZoningCode/Maps/1CGN.pdf

www.googleearth.com

2D and 3D Models:

www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/BRA_3D_Models/Index.html

(For 2D: CAD Layers can be found under Building footprints, Streets, City blocks)



SITE

vertical vent structure
must remain!

Suggested Online Bibliography/Resources:

Texts:

Miessen, Markus and Kenny Cupers. Spaces of Uncertainty. Verlag Muller + Busmann, 2002.

Online references for article:

www.edit-revue.com/?Article=100

http://edit-revue.com/docs/EDIT_100E.pdf

LOCAL CHINATOWN ORGANIZATIONS/EVENTS:

www.filmsatthegate.org

www.bostonstreetlab.org

www.chinatownmainstreet.org

www.storefrontlibrary.org

Precedents:

Chinatown – “Films at the Gate”

MFA film series

ICA film series,

Wormwood Theater (summer only - outdoor film series in Fort Point Channel

Coolidge Corner Theatre

Harvard Film Archive

New York Film Forum

DCTV in New York

TKTS Pavilion (Times Square, nyc)

Parc de la villette

MOMA Film Archive

International Federation of Film Archive

Cinematheque Francaise (Frank Gehry)

German Film Institute (Deutsche Kinemathek)

MOMA Education and Research Building (houses Film Archive)

Anthology Film Archive (New York)

UCLA Film and Television Archive

National Museum of Modern Art – Japan – National Film Center

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Note to all Competitors

To ensure anonymity, each competitor will choose an abstract graphic symbol and place it:

- On the face of each submitted board.
- On the Statement of Sole Authorship with the name of the competitor clearly printed, which you place in the sealed envelope and fasten to the back of one board.
- On the face of a sealed envelope securely fastened to the back of one board.

Electronic submission:

- Due by **10:00 am on Monday, February 1, 2010** (your local time) to snastasia@architects.org
- Email a digital copy of your boards in pdf format and/or low 72 dpi jpeg
- Attachments/boards may be submitted separately but each email must be smaller than 15MB
- You are welcome to use FTP software like:
<http://www.yousendit.com/>
<http://www.sendspace.com/>
<http://www.dropsend.com/>

Board submission:

- Must exactly match digital submission, no edits permitted
- Due by **5:00 pm on Friday, February 5, 2010.**
- Mail or drop off to:
The Rotch Scholarship
c/o Boston Society of Architects
Fourth Floor
52 Broad Street
Boston, MA 02109

Statement of Sole Authorship

I hereby assure the Rotch Committee that I am the sole author of my submission for the 2010 Rotch Competition. I have not received criticism, suggestions or help of any sort other than through the use of books and other published literature.

Signed_____

Print Name_____

Symbol_____

Note to all Competitors:

The above statement of sole authorship shall be placed in the sealed envelope pasted on the back of the board. Your symbol must appear on the envelope as well as on the face of your submission boards.